

2 August 1989

\low\Johnson.1

Dump for sections omitted from \low\Johnson. In particular, for passages that result in re-thinking by me: replaced by "corrected" versions in \low\Johnson.

What I am pointing toward is the importance of eschewing--for practical purposes, by agreement with the Soviets--damage-limiting capabilities, especially those that rely on or encourage "prompt response" or preemption, for the same reasons that it is desirable to agree mutually to forego SDI.

(The argument for mutually foregoing first-use is similar, but is much less based on the danger of evoking preemption in a crisis or LOW: except in Europe! After all, the new argument I am making for Europe is that, as in Cuba II, there is a real danger that SNF will be used preemptively, where the fear is of non-nuclear attack or capture

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NO: scratch italicized part! I have been thinking of No first use primarily outside Europe--even though the public discussion has been of Europe. Outside Europe, the expectation is of FU threats will be made or carried out against non-nuclear forces, and by US nuclear forces that are not immediately threatened by non-nuclear attack or capture. This is the historical context. So the preemptive motive does not apply.

But in Europe, the situation is the same as with strategic forces, though the pressure to "use them or lose them" comes as much from threat of non-nuclear attack or capture as from the risk of nuclear attack. (Thus, the pressure is, if anything, greater. One fears to lose one's tactical forces even before the opponent is forced to cross the nuclear threshold. Moreover, there appears a real prospect that the limited use of tactical nuclear weapons could serve a limited military purpose, of averting battlefield disaster.

Neither of these might impress a President, but could certainly affect a field commander. Moreover, the nuclear weapons might be in the hands of allied commanders who were facing or had experienced the total occupation (and perhaps destruction, by non-nuclear attack) of their homeland.

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Moreover, to say that subjective certainty is not required for Launch on Tactical Warning is to broaden this set very significantly, since evidence that points to a considerable likelihood of enemy attack while remaining somewhat ambiguous, contradictory, incomplete and "uncertain" is very much more common--in the absence of an actual attack--than evidence that appears



(falsely) "unequivocal."

The latter sort of false alarm--which is what the term "mistake" usually suggests--is also possible and remains a problem; but it would be joined as a possible source of a US-initiated strategic war by a large set of circumstances in which evidence was recognized to be more ambiguous.

The word "mistake" or "error" is less clearly appropriate in these cases, and to focus on "mistaken" or inadvertent or accidental war may be to deny or ignore the possibility, likelihood or significance of cases when strategic war may be initiated by high-level officials acting deliberately on what they understand to be uncertain evidence.

Can a judgment--based on reasonable inference from plausible evidence--that an enemy attack "may be" underway or imminent be said clearly to be "mistaken" or "false," absent some evidence or argument that such an event was "impossible"?

When a horse loses a race, all those who believed that it was "certain" to win are found to have been "mistaken." But what of those who bet on it in the belief that it "might" win, that it "had a chance"? Were they clearly "wrong," mistaken, in error, foolish, to have bet on it? Would that not depend, in part, on the odds, and the evidential basis of their beliefs or hopes?

Thus, we do not call someone necessarily foolish having bought fire insurance, even if no fire occurs during the life of the policy. Advocates of damage-limitation capabilities appeal to this analogy when they call such capabilities "insurance," "hedging against the possibility that nuclear war--despite all our efforts to deter and avert it--might occur."

The analogy can be dangerously misleading; fire insurance is not usually thought of as increasing the likelihood of fires (except in the garment district). But it conveys the real subjective state of mind of the planners and analysts, who see themselves as pursuing "complex" sets of goals or balancing serious values against each other rather than as ignoring or violating simple and obvious moral rules. Thus, see Paul Davis' argument, p. 53, that LUA is not a moral question.

I am not endorsing Davis' argument, which I think is foolish on both moral and practical grounds, for the reasons CJ gives and others. But I suspect CJ fails to understand why Davis takes the position he does, since Davis apparently does not mention, and CJ does not guess, the consideration of damage limitation which, I feel sure, underlies Davis' endorsement of LUA and its morality.

Since the argument about enhancing deterrence that Davis does imply looks very thin to CJ (I would agree), and since CJ never recognizes any other motive at all for LUA, he can't imagine any reason for LUA that might appear (to Davis, "reasonably") legitimate or moral, possibly counterbalancing the admitted risk of

false alarm, or of--what shall we call it?--mistaken gamble, unpremeditated, preemptive war, attack to limit damage from a feared, suspected possible enemy attack...